

Social Problems and its Relationship with Family Institution in Felda Settlements: the Local Perspective

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Abstract

Malaysia is targeted to be an industrialized nation by year 2020. In this context, FELDA has been identified as a new industrialized town in order to achieve part of this ambition. The absence of a balanced development would- lead to negative effects which in the long-run might affect the target and the future planning of the nation. Among the main objectives of this research are: to identify what are the types of social problems in FELDA; to find the root of cause those problems from the local perspective; and to propose dysfunction as well as to draw up a few steps or measures on how to overcome them. Results of the research are as follows: i) many respondents stated that their parents were the cause of moral decadence; ii) Drugs abuse was also associated with the increase in crimes; vi) the level of academic achievements of the early settlers' children was also not very encouraging; vii) attitude of putting too much emphasis on materialism amongst parents were said to have been the main cause of their children getting little or no religious education; and viii) parents' attitude of not taking seriously any wrongdoings of their children. The research suggests as follows: i) effort and cooperation of various parties including the leaders, the schools, and the authorities the religious departments as well as the management of FELDA are important; ii) parents must be firm in nurturing and educating their children; iii) the empowerment and the implementation of laws should be emphasized especially by the Police; iv) awareness of religion also plays a very important role in the lives of human beings; v) schools are to be pro-active in solving the social and disciplinary problems amongst students.

Introduction

The establishment of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) in 1956 is one of the steps towards developing the country through social restructuring that was fielded towards the eradication of poverty and distribution of wealth. From its humble beginning, it has developed into a giant organization covering an area of 853, 313 hectares (79% planted with oil palm, 15% rubber and 6% village areas). More than 530, 000 people are benefiting from FELDA which comprises of settlers, FELDA staff, contract workers and their families.¹

¹ http://www.felda.net.my/felda/english/settler_statistik.asp

The FELDA Settlements were equipped with communication facilities and modern infrastructure. These included the building of shopping centers, schools, mosques, health clinics, police stations, and also factories to process raw materials produced by the relevant settlements. It was clear then the settlement were planned to develop as a modern agricultural society. In fact, as a step towards becoming a developed-nation in the year 2020, the FELDA settlements were entrusted with a more challenging objective. I.e. to develop as a new industrialized centre based on agriculture.

However, there had been negative repercussions. The fall in prices of FELDA products, which are oil palm, rubber and all oil palm-based and rubber-based products in addition to the inflation and the downturn in the world economy had produced a spiraling effect on the welfare of the FELDA settlers and their families. It was reported in 1999 that 40 000 settlers were living beneath the poverty level.² In relation to that, social problems in other FELDA settlements were later uncovered.³ It was very certain then that the FELDA society was facing serious problems. The family, as the smallest society unit, needed to be charged with positive values so as to ensure family members grew up within the same value system so that they could face the problems. The difference in systems as a result of these would bring about chronic social problems.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous social problems in FELDA had been reported through the mass media. Some probably had been “sensationalized” and exaggerated. So far, information gathered through scientific researches about the social problems of the FELDA society are very limited. In depth knowledge about these matters are very pertinent, especially by parties responsible in the planning and the implementation of policies relating to FELDA.

Research Objectives

This research was planned with the purpose of investigating the social problems in FELDA settlements. Specifically, this research is based on the following objectives: i) identifying the main types of social problems; ii) identifying the cause of those social problems in FELDA settlements; and iii) to gather substantive opinions and proposals on ways to solve the above mentioned problems.

Since the social problems are a very complex issue, this research chose to use and apply the local perspective as the framework to the research. This research’s emphasis was put on the meaning and understanding of social problems according to the “natives”.

To fulfill these objectives, this research used qualitative, descriptive approach. This step was considered relevant to the research questions whose purpose was to find answers according to local perspective, that is, the people who were involved with the case. The design of the case study was also found to produce underlying theories and a rich source of information about social problems in FELDA of which the outside society may not be aware of.

The main source of these data is from a number of informants. Besides the settlers, data were collected from their wives and their children, the managers and assistant managers of the settlement, JKKR officers, the police and the Education Offices, headmasters and teachers. A research assistant using unstructured open-ended questions interviewed every informant. The questions posed by the research assistant were about the type, the cause and the ways to overcome the social problem in each FELDA settlement. The responses given by the respondents were recorded verbatim. The research assistants also asked for copies of documents, especially written information related to pertinent issues during the interview.

All written records and open documents were checked after an interview was done. Based on “verbatim” notes and interview summaries, the researcher tried to detect metaphors, main themes, and

² New Straits Times, 16 January 1999

³ Utusan Malaysia, 14 Mac 1998; Utusan Melayu, 16 Jun 1999

repeated patterns that represent the meanings, causes and proposals in overcoming the social problems among informants.

In order to identify the perception of students, a questionnaire was used in this research. Aside from getting demographic information, the questionnaire contained 42 questions that touched on different aspects of the students' views towards their lives with their families.

Literature Review

FELDA is one of the largest Malay settlements in Malaysia. It represents 15% of the overall population in Malaysia. The activities of the society are still influenced by the Malay traditions and culture. The research that are done on these settlements are very important because they could give overall picture about the lives of the FELDA society.

There had not been any in-depth research regarding issues related to the social problems that occur in FELDA settlements. Many researches that were conducted revolve around socio-economy, administration and the management of FELDA lands. For example, research that were conducted by Alladin Hashim (1987), Azlinor Suffian (1985), Asan Ali Golam Hassan (1999), Norlia Fikri Abdul Samad (2009), and Sulong Mohamad (2001) concentrated more on the effectiveness of FELDA in developing the socio-economic status of settlers as well as research into factors that influenced their incomes especially the oil palm and rubber. These researches will assist the FELDA administrators to evaluate the efficiency of their administration, and therefore take the relevant actions to correct any shortcomings. These researches also touched upon the social problems that existed in FELDA in particular Rozumah Baharudin (2009), and Normah (2005). An interesting research conducted by Azizi Yahaya (2009) aimed at getting a clearer picture of how the attitudes and roles of parents in FELDA on the education of their children. Many of the research mentioned above were conducted to fulfill one of the requirements for getting an academic degree in the chosen field. Still, absence of research that focuses on social problems in the FELDA settlements justifies the importance of why this type of research ought to be done.

The research that was sponsored by the Darul Takzim Family Development Foundation and the Johor State Government which was headed by Professor Dr. Rokiah and assisted by Dr. Suradi Salim and Dr. Husain Mohamed from University of Malaya in year 2000 was one of the latest researches that discussed these problems in greater detail. The objective of that research was to observe the overall FELDA society's way of life, to identify the social problems faced by the settlers, causes of those problems and to propose or suggest a way to solve those problems. That research was carried out on sixteen (16) FELDA settlements from Johor, with 1,954 had been interviewed. The results of the research showed that the FELDA settlements displayed a variety of social problems such as drug addiction, juvenile delinquencies, and unemployment among youths.

The research had been conducted in order to observe the same problems from a different perspective. The research method has been designed by into consideration few aspects that had not been ventured into these previous researches. This research had been divided into two stages. The first phase was a pilot study that was conducted in FELDA PT, Johor Darul Takzim. The results of the approach that was applied in the first phase of the study had been adapted in the second phase of this research that was conducted in FELDA LH. Several adaptations had been done on the approach of the second phase research to ensure that any short coming in the previous phase could be overcome. In the present research, interviews were not only conducted with parents and the authorities but were also conducted on school students. This technique was drawn up in order to get a clearer picture of the problems discussed as well as to cover all relevant aspects.

Result: Case Study 1: FELDA PT

FELDA PT, which is located in Johor, was officially launched in 1972. The effort to grow oil palm was initiated by the Government in 1973 whereas the relocation of pioneer settlers was only opened in 1977. It was estimated that 3600 settlers including 460 pioneer settlers migrated to FELDA PT. The relocation of the pioneer settlers in FELDA was divided into 21 groups that were called “Blocks”, each with its own head. Majority of the settlers in FELDA were Malays with Islam as their religion.

This research took into consideration two categories of information. First, to get the latest information about the social problems, especially those related to family institutions for example, problems that relates to divorces, juvenile delinquency, incest, alcohol addiction and others. Second, reliable documents had been referred to from various sources related to the research. Thus, field research that involved interview technique and document analysis were used to measure the social problems in these FELDA settlements.

A series of interviews with the authorities were carried out. The authorities consisted of the managers and administrators of FELDA, the school (the principal, counselors and discipline teachers), police officers, officers from the Social Welfare Office, and officers from the Religious Department. Aside from that, a few pioneer settlers, their wives and children were also involved in the data and information collection process. Special attention was given to a few family members in order to identify the real cause of the social problems in that FELDA. Its selection was based on three categories of families as follows: i) broken families; ii) families headed by a single mother; and iii) family members with problems.

Table 1: The Dispersion of Research Informant according to Role classification.

	Role	Nos.	Percentage (%)
1	Land Program Officer/FELDA Manager	1	3.84
2	JKKR Chairman	1	3.84
3	Social Welfare Officer	1	3.84
4	Consultation Officer – Religious Department	1	3.84
5	Social Bureau Supervisor	1	3.84
6	Police Officer	2	7.68
7	Deputy Principal & Senior Assistant 1	1	3.84
8	Teacher	3	11.5
9	Settler/Taxi Driver	1	3.84
10	Female settler	4	15.4
11	Student	10	38.4

The basic questions put forward during the interviews were with the sole purpose of identifying problems, causes and proposals/ suggestions in overcoming them according to the respondents’ views. Interviews had been conducted informally and on an unstructured basis. This is so to give flexibility and freedom to the questions posed and follow-up with more open views and suggestions. But even so, a few main and important questions had been drawn up in order to get the answers needed.

The field research in FELDA PT was conducted for a week, with two researchers and two research assistants had been trained to interview the chosen respondents and they had been supervised by two researchers.

Social Problems in FELDA PT

The analysis of interview data with the informants had resulted in uniform conclusions. Almost all of the respondents talked about similar problems. The problems voiced out by the respondents had socio-legal characteristics and these were classified as financial problems, crime, social relationships and broken families. Among the teenagers of FELDA PT, the problems detected from the collected data were problems relating to discipline, negative culture, and weak religious faith.

Table 2: Problems in FELDA PT According to Views of Respondents

Category of Problem	Wrongdoing Indicator
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and Recession • Wife who support family • Mother and underage children forced to work in factories • Indefinite Ownership of Land
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stealing, especially motorcycle. • Drug addiction. • Illegal racing. • Burglary. • Gangsterism. • Watching pornographic videos. • Rape. • Juvenile delinquency.
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No unity among settlers. • HIV cases • Babies born “out-of-wedlock”.
Broken Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfaithful husbands and wives. • Divorces. • Domestic Violence • Incest. • Problematic families. • Abandoned children.
Religious Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not perform weekly Friday prayers. • Practices black magic. • Gambling and lottery.

Table 3 summarises the result of data analysis conclusion on the wrongdoings of schoolchildren in FELDA PT. The information in Table 3 was the result of interviews with school administrators, teachers, and students of the schools concerned.

Table 3: Problems in FELDA PT Schools According to Views of Informant

Main Problems in Schools	Wrongdoings Indicator
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disobey school rules. • Absent from school. • Fighting. • Smoking. • Bullying.
Negative Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own trash magazines • Influenced by Western culture through mannerism. • Artiste idolatry. • Clubbing. • Lazy
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual abuse. • Babies born “out-of-wedlock”. • Running away from home. • Khalwat (close proximity) • Gangsterism.
Crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pornographic videos. • Burglaries in homes and school. • Drug addiction. • Gambling. • Vandalism. • Illegal racing.

Religious Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non performance of daily prayers. • Could not read Quran. • Did not attend weekly Friday prayers. • Gambling.
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Table 4 lists down the causes of wrongdoing according to the views of informants. When the data given by respondents were examined, five dimensions were found which act as the basic causes of these problems. These are the economic factors, attitude and parents' education, religious upbringing, outside influences and the effectiveness of social programs organized.

Table 4: Cause of Problems According to Respondents' Views

Category of Cause	Specific Causes
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic recession • Poverty • Large numbers of family members • No fixed job and unemployment
Parents' Education and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less exposure to formal and informal education • Parents not too concerned with children's welfare • Parents giving in too much to children • Limited involvement between parents and children • Wrong approach in parents' nurturing of children • Parents allowing children to smoke
Religious Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less awareness in the role of religion • Not knowing how to pray • Not enough emphasis on spiritual upbringing by relevant bodies/parties
Environmental Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in place, culture and practice • Differences in political understanding • Existence of drug pushers. • Weak implementation of law • Media influence • Imbalance development • Dishonest leaders • Presence of outsiders
Social Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlers not interested in social activities • Ineffective communication among members of society • Materialistic • No teamwork • Ineffective and unorganized activities.

Many evidences strengthen the assumption that social problems in FELDA originates from dysfunction families. Almost all aspects touched are related to family institution. The elements of family could be clearly seen in all the causes of the listed problems. From the economic aspects as well as the religious aspects, the failure of the family institution to function effectively can be put forth as the biggest cause of all types of social problems in FELDA.

Aside from that, there were other factors that contribute to the social problems at FELDA PT. Three main factors which should be given more attention were economy, parents' attitude and religious upbringing. The result of the analysis showed the huge influence of all these three aspects. This had forced both male and female settlers to find other sources of income. As a result, there surfaced other related problems, especially when the settlers' wives had to work night shifts in factories far away from home. When the said family failed to manage this problem effectively, it opens room for other social problems to occur.

Ways to Overcome Social Problems in FELDA PT

Data showed that the interviewed respondents had various ideas in offering solutions to these problems in FELDA PT. The suggestions proposed were divided into five groups (Table 5). The five categories of solution that were put forth were the ways to solve education problems in schools, parents' education, religious education, group action as well as reactive action or measures.

Table 5: Ways to Overcome Problems according to Respondents' Views

Category of Suggestion	Specific Suggestions
Children's Education: Roles of Parents and Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a good role model • Parents and teachers should discuss children's problems • Parents provide be firm with children and not always give in to children's wants • Must have time for their children • Teachers must have close relationship with their students • Implementation of 'merit de merit' system • Monitoring of prayers by teachers • Motivation and self development programs • Involvement of students in self development programs • Inculcate affinity and closeness to religion through prayers by teachers and students • "Solat Hajat" during examination times • Teachers visiting students at home • Encourage children to involve themselves in fruitful activities. • Close monitoring by Parent-Teachers' Associations members outside of school • Disciplinary action • To send problematic students to Character Rehabilitation Centres
Non-formal/Informal Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign by compulsory parties • Counseling for husbands and wives and parenting. • Family Awareness Programs • Women's motivation programme • Awareness campaign on crime and its implications • Family Advice Services • Family Development Seminars (District and State Levels)
Religious/Spiritual Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly talks by Religious Department • Reading of Yassin every Friday night • Special Religious Classes for female settlers • Family Values Assimilation Programs • Pre-marriage Courses
Group Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police control • Close monitoring of activities of Black Magic group • RELA to have a schedule for patrolling • Village Sports Festival

Results of Case Study 1: FELDA LH

FELDA LH, situated about 40 km from the capital town of Johore, had relocated approximately 300 settlers together with their families. The number of settlers in FELDA LH when it was first opened in the late 70s was about 3000 people. Almost all of the settlers there were Malay Muslims.

The settlers of FELDA LH also experienced the economic crisis. As a result of the fall in prices of oil palm and rubbers, it was estimated that about two-thirds of the settlers had to resort to full-time jobs outside of FELDA LH. Most of them worked in factories (60%), building sites (20%), hotels and supermarkets (10%), and also as grass trimmers (10%). Besides that, it was estimated that about 100

housewives and 50 of the settlers' children also worked in factories that were located in various places close to FELDA LH as a way to support their household needs.

The field research was conducted through two research techniques, i.e., structured interviews and questionnaires. The interview technique was used to examine information on the problems, causes of the problems, and solutions to overcome the said problems from relevant parties. We had chosen 28 respondents as per listed in Table 6 and these categories of respondents had assisted in the triangulation process so as to guarantee the credibility of the research' findings.

Table 6: Dispersion of Research Respondents According to Pole Classification

Personnel	Number	%
FELDA Managers	1	3.6
FELDA Assistant Managers	1	3.6
FELDA Clerks	1	3.6
JKKR Officers	3	10.7
Community Development Officers	1	3.6
School Principals	1	3.6
Teachers	6	21.4
Education Officers	1	3.6
Police Officers	3	10.7
Settlers (Male)	5	17.9
Settlers (Female)	5	17.9
	28	100.0

The interview technique was also used to get the views of students regarding aspects that relate to their family, family relationships, and parents' concern towards schooling. All the 90 Form four students of FELDA LH secondary school were chosen as respondents. The background of the students involved in the research is summarized in Table 6.

In order to get the views of Form Four students of the relevant school towards educational and family issues, a questionnaire had been formed. This questionnaire contains 43 items that were divided into sections. The first part contains six items that were generally related to the family's time management. Questions put forth were related to parents' occupations, working hours, and involvement in PTAs (Parent/Teachers' Associations). The second part contains six items relating to activities done together with families.

The third part of the questionnaire focuses on the students' views towards their parents' concern towards their studies as well as students' attitudes towards education and social issues among school students. This part contains 27 items. The fourth part or section focuses on the students' views towards how they overcome family and social problems.

Problems in FELDA LH

Almost all the respondents voiced out similar problems which had socio-legal characteristics and these were classified as financial problems, crime, social relationships, and broken families. Among FELDA LH teenagers of which majority of them were still schooling, problems of discipline, negative culture, and non-practicing of religion were also identified from the collected data.

Table 7 lists the wrongdoings indicators in FELDA LH that were obtained from this research according to category of problems. Although the frequency of each case could not be researched, the indicator of wrongdoings reported by the informant that the environment of FELDA LH is not excluded from serious problems which hinders healthy development. It was therefore clear that the residents of FELDA LH faced a variety of inter-related socio-legal problems.

Table 7: Problems in FELDA LH According To Views of Respondents

Category of problems	WRONGDOINGS' INDICATOR
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Wife supporting whole family/ husband jobless • Underage children working in factories.
Crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal motorcycle racing. • Watching pornographic videos. • Drug addiction. • House-breaking/burglaries.
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loitering/Dating. • Wasting time at food stalls. • Coming home late at night. • Presence of outsiders. • Khalwat (Close proximity of opposite sex) • Babies born out-of-wedlock.
Broken families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deserted wives • Deserted husbands. • Parents divorce. • Problematic families. • Fathers' practicing polygamy and neglecting his duties. • Neglected children.
Religious Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gambling. • Illegal gambling. • Alcohol-drinking. • Did not attend Friday Jama'ah prayers.

Table 8 summarises the results of the data analysis towards wrongdoings amongst school students in FELDA LH. The summarized information in Table 4 was collected by the District Education Officers, the Principals and teachers from three (03) schools in that FELDA.

Table 8: Problems in FELDA LH School According To Views of Respondents

Main Problems in School	Problem Indicator(s)
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaliation- Continuous break-in into Teachers' Room.* • Vandalisme* • Smoking.* • Playing truant from schools.*
Negative Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loitering/Dating. • Punk culture and "skinhead". • Rude towards teachers.*
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free mixing of boys and girls. • Babies born out-of-wedlock. • Fighting. • Gangsterism.
Crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal racing. • Stealing motorcycles.* • Watching pornographic videos. • Drug addiction. • Gum smelling.* • Stealing.* • House break-ins. • School break-ins. • Vandalism.*
Religious Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not pray.

* Also done by primary school students.

** Also done by female students.

The results showed at least three rather surprising findings. First, the type of problems covered a variety of wrongdoings that would normally happen amongst school students in big towns. Secondly, there were secondary schools students in that FELDA who did not even know how to perform daily prayers. Thirdly, serious wrongdoings such as breaking into Teachers' Rooms, vandalism, and breaking into shops were also done by primary school students and female students.

The number of settlers' children in FELDA is more than 2300 but up until now, only 1.5% (35 children) had managed to further their studies to institutions of higher learning. FELDA LH could only be proud of the 23 FELDA children who graduated from universities (including four engineers, a medical doctor, three accountants, and a law graduate) (Table 9). The collected data also showed the existence of a high percentage of poor academic performance amongst FELDA settlers' children. For example, out of 88 students who sat for their PMR in 1999, only 75 of them managed to sit for their SPM exams in year 2001.

Table 9: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of FELDA LH's Children Going to Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL)

Institutions	Field	Frequency	%
IHL (Public)	Engineering	4	17.4
	Medicine	1	4.3
	Accountancy	3	13.0
	Architecture	1	4.3
	Computer Science	3	13.0
	Law	1	4.3
	Pharmacy	1	4.3
	Business	3	13.0
	Information Technology	2	8.7
	Education	4	17.4
IHL (Private)	Architecture	1	4.3
	Computer Science	1	4.3
	Information Technology	3	13.0
College/ILP		2	8.7
		3	13.0
		2	8.7
		23	100.0

Other than economic problems, the level of the residents' education, whether formal or non-formal education was limited, became an additional factor for the problems in FELDA. Not only parents did not concern of their children's condition, some parents gave their children "license" for their children to smoke. There are also parents that hide their children's wrongdoings.

The data analysis also discovered the views that the lack of religious education seemed to be the causes of problems at FELDA LH. Overall, the respondents that were interviewed said that there were parents who lack awareness and lack religious education. They were also not interested to attend the religious talks organized.

Besides that, there were also external factors, which contribute to the to the complexity of problems in FELDA LH. Aside from peer influence, traders' attitudes and measures taken by police, and the Health Department were mentioned as one of the causes as to why negative factors from outside spread freely. Information received stated that traders sold cigarettes to schoolchildren, pornographic video traders would come twice a week to sell their wares in FELDA LH, continuous supply of drugs were available, and the presence of uncontrolled number of entertainment centres. It was believed that a number of respondents regretted the authorities' in handling / mishandling the problems.

Lastly, the failure of FELDA's management to implement social welfare programs effectively and continuously, were assumed by the respondents as contributors to the problems concerned.

Causes of Problems

Table 10 listed the causes of wrongdoings according to the views of the respondents. When the data given by the respondents were delved into, five “variables” were found to be the basic causes of those problems; i.e. economy, attitude and education of parents, religious education, outside influences, and the effectiveness of social programs organized by social bodies in that FELDA.

Table 10: Causes of Problems According to the Respondents’ Views

Category of Causes	Specific Causes
Economic	Economic recession. Materialisme. 50% wives work in factories. 30% settlers working outside settlements. Wives working night shifts in factories.
Education and Attitude of Parents	Lack of both formal and non-formal education. Lack of attention from parents. Parents as bad role model. Inadequate involvement of parents in school. Parents hiding children’s faults.
Religious Education	Lack of awareness about religion. Lack of religious educations.
Environmental Influences	Peer Influence. Shopkeepers selling cigarettes to schoolchildren. Traders selling pornographic videos. Continuous supply of drugs. Poor enforcement by police. Too many entertainment centres. Mass media Influence.
Social Programs	Not interested in JKRR programs. Social bodies not close to teenagers.

Almost all respondents related economic factor as the main cause of the various problems in FELDA LH. Male and female settlers were forced to find other sources of income, including working in factories. Other problems also surfaced, especially when settlers’ wives became involved with other men whilst working the night shift in factories outside FELDA.

Solutions to Problems

Data showed that the respondents had lots of ideas for solving the problems in FELDA LH. The suggestions proposed were classified into five categories (Table 11). The results of the data analysis showed variety of responses from the respondents about ways to overcome the problems found in FELDA LH. This analysis tabled five categories of suggested solutions to solve the education problems in schools, of parents’ education, spiritual education, group action, and reactive measures.

Table 11: Ways to Solve Problems According To Respondents' Views

Category of Suggestion	Specific Suggestions
Children's Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start Education Fund. • Supplementary school meals for poor students. • Have full-time counselor. • Increase parents' participation in PTAs. • Joint program with JKRR to help children. • "Academic Day" to be held at night. • School counseling services for parents. • Dialogue between school principals and parents. • Discussion of problems between teachers and parents. • Motivation for learning. • Make it compulsory for students to join co-curricular activities or uniformed bodies in schools. • Cooperation from the Social Welfare Department. • Penalize students who break rules. • Punishment by caning to be reinstated. • Take action on teachers who smoke.
Non-Formal Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Program. • Counseling. • Talks. • Motivational courses (BTN courses). • State Security Committee Courses. • Increase programs on awareness and motivation.
Spiritual Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al-Quran Skills Classes. • Talks relating to religion. • "Majlis Ilmu" every month. • Religious Talk/Forum on current social issues • "Fardhu 'Ain/Fardhu Kifayah" Classes. • Recitation of Surah Yassin according to Blocks. • Programs to enhance spirituality.
Group Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JKRR to form Youth Movement. • To form RELA committee. • To form Religious Bureau. • To activate Youth Club. • Sports. • "Gotong Royong" amongst youth • Police friendly activities with the people.
Reactive Actions or Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to relevant houses for advice. • Give reminders and warnings. • Warning letters for those who did not perform Jumaat prayers. • Report to Kadhi's office. • Report to the police. • Reprimand settlers who commit crimes. • Drug addicts to be reprimanded and asked to leave FELDA. • Arrest guilty party and send to Religious office. • Change ownership of land to wife for settlers with problem. • "Curfew" after 10.00 pm.

Among the suggestions put forth by the respondents, there appear to be a few suggestions that were related to the socio-legal aspect. Major problems occur, especially crime-related problems, encourage the respondents to suggest tough reactive steps/actions. Among others are suggestions to

have “curfew” after 10.00 pm, arrest and send those party (ies) to Religious Department and change the ownership of property from the problematic settler to his wife.

Results of Data Analysis of Questionnaires

Table 12 summarised the distribution of schoolchildren who were used as samples based on their backgrounds. Data showed that 22.9% of the students’ fathers worked outside FELDA, and 15.2% of the students’ mothers worked outside the FELDA. Only 21.0% of their parents were reported as “always” attending the school PTA activities.

Table 12: Respondents’ Frequency Distribution Based On Background Characteristics

Background		Number	%
Sex	Male	50	50.0
	Female	50	50.0
Fathers’ Occupation (Outside FELDA)	None	74	77.1
	Working Outside	22	22.9
Mother’s Occupation (Outside FELDA)	None	84	84.8
	Working Outside	15	15.2
Parents’ Involvement in PTA	Always	21	21.0
	Sometimes	75	75.0
	Never	4	4.0

Table 13: Distribution of Sample Perception towards Certain/Some Aspects of Schooling

Aspects of Schooling		Number	%
Favourite Subjects	Bahasa Melayu	38	38.0
	Bahasa Inggeris	7	7.0
	Matematik	14	14.0
	Sejarah	9	9.0
	Pendidikan Islam	20	20.0
	Other Subjects	12	12.0
Not-so-Favourite Subjects	Bahasa Melayu	-	-
	Bahasa Inggeris	46	56.8
	Matematik	18	22.2
	Sejarah	5	6.2
	Pendidikan Islam	-	-
	Other Subjects	12	14.8
Interest in Schooling	Like school	94	95.9
	Dislike school	4	4.1
Tuition Class	Yes	84	84.4
	No	15	15.2
Plans after finishing school	Further studies	85	85.0
	Work	8	8.0
	Not sure	7	7.0

Table 13 summarized information about perceptions of students towards some aspects of schooling. It was observed that Bahasa Melayu was the favourite subjects among (38%) of students, and this was followed by Pendidikan Islam. On the other hand, Bahasa Inggeris (56.8%) and Matematik (22.2%) were reported as being not-so-favourite subjects. But overall, majority of the students have a positive perception towards education. Data showed that more than 80% of students liked schooling, going to tuition classes, and are interested in furthering their studies to institutions of higher learning.

Table 14 contains a summary of data analysis regarding students' perceptions towards activities with their families. The data showed that 54% of the students had a chance to eat with their whole families at least once a day. Also almost one third of the students reported that they always do "gotong royong" with their families. Only 16% of the students reported that they always "solah jamaah" led by their own fathers.

Table 14: Frequency Distribution of Activities with Families

Activity		Number	%
Frequency of Eating Together	3 – 4 times daily	21	21.0
	1 – 2 times daily	33	33.0
	Sometimes	39	39.0
	Cannot be determined	7	7.0
"Solah Jamaah" with Family	Always	16	16.0
	Sometimes	67	67.0
	Never	17	17.0
Imam/Leader whilst "Solah Jamaah"	Father	74	85.1
	Brother	7	8.0
	Grandfather	2	2.3
	The student	2	2.3
	Other people	2	2.3
"Gotong Royong"	Always	31	31.0
	Sometimes	65	65.0
	Never	4	4.0

Table 16 summarized the students' perceptions towards their parents' concern and attitude. In general, many students have a positive view towards the concern and attitude of their parents. More than two-thirds of the students reported that their parents would check their exercise books and workbooks and pay attention to them. More than 90% of the students said that their parents all know when they went out with their friends and that they did not want to choose other families. However, only 66% of the sample said that they were taught to read the Qur'an by their parents.

Table 16: Percentage Distribution of Students' Perception towards Concern and Attitude of Parents

Parents	Yes	No	n
• Check exercise books	71.4	28.6	98
• Concern over their children	100.0	-	100
• Teach their children to read the Qur'an	66.0	34.0	100
• Know when their children went out	88.0	12.0	100
• Your family is happy	94.0	6.0	100
• You want to choose another family	88.9	11.1	100

The students' report about the way they overcome the problems was summarized in Table 17. The results of the data analysis found that many of the students (70%) pray and were patient when they were faced with family problems. Some of the students (40%) just kept quiet and kept problems to themselves. There were also students who dealt with the problems by confiding in somebody, especially their family members (27%) and their friends (28%).

Table 17: Distribution of How Students Overcame Their Problems

Method of Solution	YES (%)	NO (%)
Prayed and Be Patient	70.0	30.0
Suffer in silence	40.0	60.0
Confided in family member(s)	27.0	73.0
Confided in friend(s)	28.0	72.0
Confided in Counselor(s)	3.0	97.0
Confided in “Ustaz”/ “Ustazah”	3.0	97.0
Played truant from school	4.0	96.0
Rebelled towards parents	6.0	94.0
Smoked cigarettes	2.0	98.0
Took drugs	0.0	100.0
Drank alcohol	0.0	100.0

N = 100

Findings and Discussion

According to the views of the local residents, social problems existed and spread widely in both FELDA settlements being researched. In general, the problems that were found were categorized as: economic problems, crime, social relationships, broken families, and religious faith. The range of the type of problems were from wife working alone to support the whole family to problems that can destroy the society (for example, wrong use and distribution of drugs, illegal racing, incest, the spread of HIV, divorces, wrong teachings of religion, practice of black magic). For the school going children, it was reported that wrongdoings are related to discipline, negative culture, social relationships, crimes, and the practice of religion.

It needs to be said that a majority of the social problems found through this research were frequently reported, especially by the media. This sensational news involved the residents of FELDA, for example, “Traditional Doctor raped a teenager...”⁴, “Wife Unfaithful, Settler Killed...”⁵, “Standard One girl killed by 10-year old...”⁶, “90% Youths from the FELDA program involved in various wrongdoings [crimes]”⁷, “FELDA Students: Wrongdoings still Happening”⁸ and “FELDA Teenager Social Problems Worrying,”⁹ confirmed the findings of this research. Even though those types of findings shamed the FELDA society (ies) – as per what was regretted by the Felda Youth Council Malaysia¹⁰ – the fact that social problems exist in FELDA is a reality that has to be faced and handled seriously.

The social problems that were related to the law clearly showed that the relevant laws were not even respected. The question that arose was: did they think that the existing laws were not effective because they were not enforced? Or was it because of other factors? As an example, illegal motorcycle racing that exists frequently was an indication that the enforcement agency was not firm. This was also true of the other crimes related to drugs and the distribution of pornographic materials through the night markets (although known to the authorities) were still conducted openly and widely because of increased demand. The authorities were also accused of collaborating with those culprits as pointed out by several respondents.

What was even more disappointing, the data showed signs of low academic achievements by the settlers’ children. Up until then, less than 2% of the settlers’ children (out of the total of 2300 children) in FELDA LH succeeded in furthering their education to institution of higher learning. These

⁴ Utusan Malaysia, 22 August 1997

⁵ Berita Harian, 17 February 2000

⁶ The STAR, 27th August 1997

⁷ Berita Harian, 10 May 1997

⁸ Utusan Malaysia, 12 August 1998

⁹ Utusan Melayu, 14 March 1998

¹⁰ Utusan Malaysia, 12th August 1998

findings were also consistent with the information that was available on academic achievements of FELDA's children in the whole country. The number of FELDA youths (the second generation of FELDA scheme who were the children of the first generation FELDA settlers) was estimated to be more than 200,000.¹¹ Unfortunately, only 8,500 children could be traced by the Ministry of Land and Cooperative Development as those who had succeeded in furthering their studies in institutions of higher learning.¹² This meant that 4.25% of the pioneer settlers' children had the chance of furthering their studies to colleges and universities. In fact, more than 95% of the FELDA youths failed in achieving higher education.

According to the locals, there were many factors that caused social problems at both FELDA programs. Social problems at both FELDA programs came from several factors i.e.; economy, education, attitude of parents, religious education, negative environmental influences and failure of social welfare programs. The list of causes reported showed that the social problems in both FELDA were very complex. Not even one factor could be "identified by the respondent as being the main and definite social cause. Every social problem was said to be caused by various factors.

When we delved further, we found that almost all of the social problems found in both FELDA settlements were due to family factors. Except for the economic recession and fall in oil palm and rubber prices, one clear cause for the cause of problems related to weaknesses of the family institution. An effective family would always be sensitive and working towards the formation and the instillation of good values through love and affection, communication, actions, instructions, and family rules that family members can accept and share together with each of its members.

Besides the family factor, this research brought forth the view(s) that the social malaise in FELDA were caused by the failure of the enforcement officers to function effectively. There were also accusations that blamed the police (with not co-operating and also delay in taking action on the problems of drugs and pornographic videos), the Health Department (failure to take quick action in testing drug addicts), the local authorities (in letting too many entertainment centres to open up), and the Religious Department (not effective in conducting spiritual programs and control).

Suggestions in Overcoming Problems

Through this case study, various suggestions were made by the respondents about ways on how to overcome problems in both their settlements. Five categories of suggestions taken from the data analysed were: i) Children's education; ii) non-formal education for the parents; iii) religious education; iv) social activities; and v) firm actions taken against all the social symptoms that had happened.

It was clear that these respondents in both FELDA settlements assumed that education was the main solution to the social problems. The education process was suggested not only for the settler's children but also for all parties that lived in FELDA especially the parents. In the meantime, the "actual" education of children needed to be reinforced at home, at the school, and in the society. Parents, on the other hand, needed to be educated through a non-formal process. Aside from the matters that could increase academic performance, the building and stabilizing of the spiritual aspect was also stressed or emphasized by respondents who were interviewed. FELDA settlers need to be given information regarding the effects of not obeying the law. The planning and implementation of educational activities that were proposed needed to be comprehensive and involve all parties.

The parties that were interviewed also proposed or suggested that group activities and reactive steps or measures be started collectively. Societies including JKKR, RELA, Religious Bureaus, Mosques Committees, and the Youth Societies were requested to cooperate with all the other bodies and societies, especially the police in planning activities.

¹¹ Utusan Malaysia, 12th August 1998); Berita Harian, 21st February 2000

¹² Utusan Malaysia, 7th July 1997.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that the enthusiasm in taking reactive measures such as these are still not enough to guarantee the achievement of the objectives in decreasing social problems and to observe the efforts on non-formal/informal education that were aimed at improving the stability of family institution. Almost all of those programs were planned and organised by the “organisers” to the settlers. Motivation and religious speakers was specially imported to the FELDA settlements. Settlers’ and participants’ overall role were that of passive receivers. They did not “own” any organised programs. The program participants were less involved in the planning, implementing, observing, and evaluating those programs. Needs analysis is a very foreign element for many of the programs and group dynamics were not used as a guide.

Implications and Suggestions

This medium-scale research had raised many more questions than answers. There are at least three categories of issues that are still unanswered. First, how widespread are the social problems in the FELDA settlements? Have the level of these social problems reached critical level? Secondly, what type of education has the potential to strengthen the family institution in order to avert the negative social elements in FELDA? Are the programs that are meant to increase awareness enough to bring about changes? What methods do the main agencies in the FELDA society’s use, especially the mosques, schools, JKKR, Youth societies, and the female settler’s societies, in order to act collectively in “educating” the FELDA society? What is the role of the target groups in that process?

Thirdly, why is the rate of academic performance FELDA children very low? What are the factors that contribute to these problems? What would be the appropriate steps taken?

In order to clarify those issues, the following measures are proposed. such as: i) Inter-discipline Follow-up Researches should be encouraged, especially in the Ministries that have direct interest in the FELDA societies; ii) Education and recovery programs should be done or carried out collectively. The main authorised body in every FELDA programs should play its role as coordinator involving all social and legal agencies in the relevant FELDA settlements; iii) Settlers should be given chance to own programs organised for them. The objectives, contents, supervision as well as evaluation of each program should involve the views of target groups; iv) All planned programs should prepare a data outline so as to facilitate the activities of supervision, evaluation, and the re-planning of the implementation of future programs.

More serious efforts should be invested by various parties in order to assist the FELDA societies to overcome their social problems. If this is successfully carried out, it is hoped that it would open doors for a better future. That, in turn will also open up avenues for the government to achieve its ambition of making Malaysia a developed nation by 2020.

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